



CRP NOTE #98
February 2, 2000

Questions have arisen regarding the eligibility of land in existing grass vegetative cover being enrolled into Continuous CRP practice CP-21, Filter Strip. For the Continuous CRP, FSA is responsible to determine that all offered land has a qualifying crop history. FSA considers land enrolled in CRP as cropland, which retains its crop history until the CRP contract expires. All lands, which do not have crop history, are ineligible for CRP, with the exception of marginal pastureland.

For the CP-21 practice, NRCS is responsible to determine that “**after CRP cover is established**” the land will function as and provide the benefits of the filter strip practice. The FSA national office has recently issued guidance that any land which is currently in vegetative cover and that is serving the purpose of a filter strip is not eligible for CRP practice CP-21. FSA has one exception to this, if the land in grass is currently enrolled in the last year of a CRP contract the land is eligible. From an FSA standpoint this means that these lands must be immediately re-enrolled from the General CRP into the Continuous CRP without a break.

If a break in CRP contract coverage occurs, or if the area has qualifying crop history and is existing grass cover, NRCS must evaluate the area to determine if it is functioning as a filter strip. NRCS Technical standard 393, Filter Strip, calls for establishment of grass stands consisting of deeply rooted, stiff stemmed, sod producing grass species which promote shallow sheet overland flow of runoff from adjacent lands. The 393 standard also calls for active management of the grass to recycle the nutrients that are trapped and taken up by the vegetation. Recycling of nutrients is best done through removal of the above ground vegetation by haying.

Existing grass stands, including expired CRP contracts in grass vegetation, which have inadequate grass species or that, have been inadequately managed are not serving the purpose of a filter strip. These areas are eligible for the Continuous CRP CP-21 practice. The conservation plan developed for these areas will specify what is required to enhance or re-establish the correct vegetative cover and provide for proper management of this practice.

Direct questions on this information to Jeff St. Ores, Water Quality Specialist or Paul Flynn, State Forester.

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist
DIST: AC
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